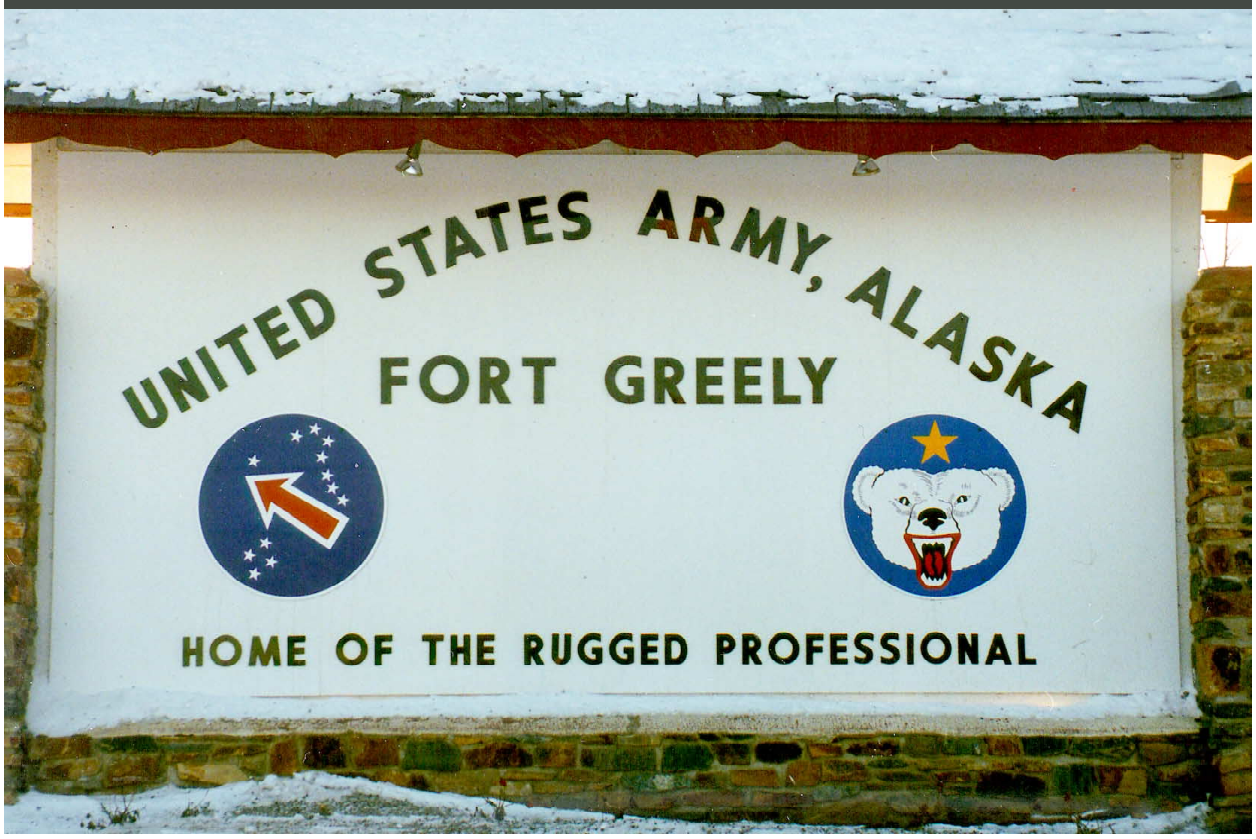
Chapter 2



2. LOCATION AND BACKGROUND

2-1 Location

Fort Greely is 107 road miles southeast of Fairbanks and six miles south of the junction of the Alaska and Richardson highways. The post lies within the central valley and hill area, bordered by the Brooks Mountain Range to the north and the Alaska Range to the south (Anonymous, 1995a). The entire region lies within the Tanana River valley. Figure 2-1 shows the general location of Fort Greely.

Fort Greely consists of the Main Post (13,399 acres); two large training areas, West Training Area (571,995 acres) and East Training Area (51,590 acres); and three outlying sites, Gerstle River Test Site (20,580 acres), Black Rapids Training Site (4,112 acres), and Whistler Creek Rock Climbing Area (542 acres).

The Main Post is southwest of Delta Junction, along the Richardson Highway. The West Training Area lies between the Richardson Highway to the east and Little Delta River to the west. Northern and southern boundaries are two northwest-southeast diagonal lines varying from a little over twenty miles apart in the east to about thirty-five miles apart in the west. The Delta River flows northward through the eastern portion of the Fort Greely West Training Area.

The East Training Area is found on the eastern side of the Richardson Highway and stretches eastward to Granite Creek. The northern boundary roughly parallels the Alaska Highway, and the southern boundary is in the foothills of the Alaska Range, on a line between Granite Mountain and Donnelly Dome.

The Gerstle River Test Site (GRTS) lies between Granite Mountain and Gerstle River, about three miles south of the Alaska Highway; the rectangular area is oriented northwest to southeast and measures

about five miles, north to south, and nine miles, east to west.

The Black Rapids Training Area and Whistler Creek Rock Climbing Area are south of Fort Greely along the east side of the Richardson Highway.

2-2 Satellite Installations

Fort Greely is a satellite installation of Fort Richardson, headquarters of U.S. Army Alaska (USARAK). The Fort Greely natural resources program is managed in conjunction with Fort Wainwright's program, and all three installations are the responsibility of USARAK. Fort Richardson and Fort Wainwright each have their own INRMPs.

2-3 Neighbors

Fort Greely is separated from Delta Junction by Jarvis Creek. Delta Junction is the largest community in the area, with 652 residents in 1990 (compared to 703 in 1970) (BLM and U.S. Army, 1994). Fort Greely employs about 40% of the local work force (HQ, USARPAC, 1996). The population of the region has been declining for many years, and considering that Fort Greely is the largest employer in the area, this trend is likely to continue with ongoing Base Realignment And Closure (BRAC) actions. The chances of development approaching the Fort Greely boundary are remote. Most of Fort Greely, except for the Main Post, is isolated from encroachment, except for remote homesteads.

Other developed areas include Big Delta to the north and the Clearwater farming/ranching area to the east. The Alaska and Richardson highways, and the TransAlaska Pipeline cross Fort Greely. The pipeline generally parallels the Richardson Highway with above and below ground sections on the West Training Area.

2-4 Acreage and Acquisition

Fort Greely comprises approximately 662,000 acres. Most land is withdrawn from public use with stipulations that vary by each withdrawal document. Fort Greely land acquisitions are shown in Figure 2-4.

A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between USARAK and BLM facilitates management of lands withdrawn for Fort Greely. The MOU includes the following stipulations:

- Both agencies will implement the *Fort Greely Resource Management Plan*
- Both agencies will coordinate with each other on military and nonmilitary activities on Fort Greely, with the Army responsible for NEPA documentation for military activities, and the BLM responsible for NEPA documentation for nonmilitary activities
- Both agencies have responsibilities for controlling public access; USARAK will coordinate with BLM to enforce public access restrictions
- Studies conducted on Fort Greely by agencies other than USARAK will be coordinated with BLM
- Fire management will be conducted in accordance with the *Fort Greely Resources Management Plan* and the *Interagency Fire Management Plan*
- Both agencies agree to a procedure to resolve disputes regarding implementation of the MOU and the *Fort Greely Resource Management Plan*
- Unless the MOU is extended, renewed, or cancelled, it will expire November 6, 2001

Per the withdrawal orders and laws creating Fort Greely, the withdrawn lands are not available for disposal, including state or Native selection, sales under FLPMA, or the Recreation and Public Purposes Act, or exchanges. No rights-of-way are allowed on withdrawn lands closed for public access. However, there is a process identified to determine the validity of rights-of-way claims for administrative purposes only.

2-5 Cultural Resources

"*Fort Greely is the richest military installation in terms of cultural resources of all ages*."[4]

In 1986, the Sixth Infantry Division (Light) completed a Historic Preservation Plan for U.S. Army

[4]Bacon et al. (1986) referring to military installations in Alaska.

lands in Alaska, including Fort Greely (Bacon et al., 1986). The plan was never signed, but contains what is known concerning cultural resources on Fort Greely. The remainder of this section, unless referenced otherwise, is condensed from that document.

There have been nine archeological investigations on Fort Greely. Six were small clearance surveys, which resulted in discovery of four sites. A 1963-1964 survey of the Donnelly Dome area found 14 prehistoric sites (West, 1967). The Donnelly Ridge site is one of the most important in interior Alaska. In 1978, a reconnaissance-level survey was conducted in various areas of Fort Greely, resulting in the discovery of 62 sites (Holmes, 1979). A 1979 survey located four sites (Bacon and Holmes, 1980). Sites are located in one of three physiographic settings: high points, bluffs or terraces overlooking a major river or site drainage, or lake margins. There is an inherent bias in this conclusion because archeological investigations have emphasized these settings.

The Sullivan Roadhouse is listed in the National Register of Historic Places. Three individual sites and the proposed Donnelly Ridge Archeological District (with 12 sites) are "Eligible" for registration. Twenty-nine sites are considered "Not Eligible" for listing on the National Register. Another 39 sites lack adequate information to determine eligibility (BLM and U.S. Army, 1994).

Only a small portion of Fort Greely, including portions of Big Delta Training Area, Black Rapids Training Site, and GRTS is highly sensitive with regard to cultural resources. Those areas, plus the cantonment area, Idaho Range, Lampkin Range, Louisiana Range, Texas Range, and Jarvis West Training Area, should be the highest priorities for cultural resources surveys. The rest of Fort Greely is low-moderate in sensitivity.

The Fort Greely area has probably supported human populations for 10,000-12,000 years. Because it was ice free during the Wisconsin glaciation, interior Alaska contains the oldest verifiable prehistoric remains in the state. The oldest radiocarbon date for any item found on the post is 8,555 ± 380 years Before Present (BP). Some undated material resembles artifacts dating back to 12,000 BP.

The oldest datable material is affiliated with Paleo-Arctic culture. The next major tradition, the Northern Archaic, is thought to have been developed in response to a warming climate when forests began to spread across the Interior.

Origins and development of the Athapaskan Indians are uncertain. The original Athapaskan homeland was the Tanana Valley. The Tanana Indians, a branch of the Northern Athapaskans, lived there both historically and prehistorically. Local bands in the vicinity of Fort Greely included the Salcha and Delta-Goodpaster. At the time of European contact, the Tanana was a highly mobile group moving to fish camps in summer and various hunting and trapping camps during other seasons. In the Fort Greely area, caribou was probably their main food source.

The discovery of a prehistoric bison bone on Fort Greely is the most provocative faunal find. Bison became extinct during the last 2,000-3,000 years due to severe winters and human predation. There is evidence that the Denali culture depended on bison and the culture likely died out with loss of the bison.

Indirect European contact with the native people began in the 1830s and 1840s, and direct trade began in the 1860s. During the 1860s, prospectors and explorers penetrated Tanana territory, and the discovery of gold in 1902 resulted in a great influx of white settlers. Shortly thereafter, the traditional way of life among the Tananas was a thing of the past.

There are three historic sites and a historic trail on Fort Greely: Sullivan Roadhouse, which is listed on the National Historic Register; Gordon's Roadhouse, which is in ruins; Ptarmigan Creek Cabin, which is in a state of minor disrepair; and parts of the Washburn-Fairbanks winter sled trail, which was serviced by the two roadhouses. (Bacon et al., 1986; BLM and U.S. Army, 1994). In 1996, the Sullivan Roadhouse was moved to Delta Junction, which alleviates the need to protect the former site from wildfires.

Salcha natives used the Delta River and Delta Creek for subsistence hunts in historic times, but most of these activities had ceased by the 1920s. By 1945,

the natives had virtually abandoned Salcha, and in 1962, there were no native settlements in the Tanana Valley between Healy Lake and Nenana. Fort Greely has been used little by natives for subsistence for many years (BLM and U.S. Army, 1994).

2-6 Installation History

Fort Greely originated as Station 17, Alaskan Wing, Air Transport Command, later known as Allen Army Airfield. The first Army units set up camp in June 1942. Throughout World War II, it served as a rest and refueling stop for American pilots on their way to Ladd Army Airfield (now Fort Wainwright) when transporting air freight and ferrying Lend-Lease planes to Russia (Anonymous, 1995a).

In 1945, Station 17 was put on the inactive status list, and was maintained by the Civil Aeronautics Authority with a skeleton crew of Army personnel. During the winter of 1947-1948, the installation was selected for the first post-war, cold weather maneuver known as "Exercise Yukon." This lead to reactivation of the installation in May 1948 and its designation as United States Troops, Big Delta, Alaska (Anonymous, 1995a).

In 1949, the installation became the site of the Arctic Training Center (HQ, USARPAC, 1996), because of its extreme winter conditions in interior Alaska and varied terrain, including rivers, lakes, swamps, and open plains. Personnel were assigned to post headquarters and three subdivisions of the Arctic Test Center: the Army Arctic Indoctrination School, Army Training Company (School Troops), and Test and Development Section.

The Army Chemical Corps Arctic Test Team was established on the installation in 1950. In 1952, the post was renamed the Army Arctic Center, and in 1953, permanent buildings, now known as the Main Post, were constructed. Original temporary buildings at the airfield are now called the Old Post. Expansion of the permanent facilities began in 1954 with construction of the post headquarters, post engineer facilities, auditorium, fire station, power plant, and other buildings.

The post was designated as Fort Greely on August 6, 1955. In 1956, the Chemical Corps Arctic Test Team was redesignated as a Class II activity, and it

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2-7 Base Realig

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ian employees at Fort Greely from about 300 to 57 and the number of military personnel from about 400 to 11 (HQ, USARPAC, 1996). Primary implementation of this INRMP will become a Fort Wainwright responsibility.

An Environmental Baseline Survey (EBS) for BRAC at Fort Greely was completed in 1996. The EBS identified contaminated properties on the surplus list and determined which properties are safe for immediate disposal and which will require remediation. Two Environmental Assessments are being prepared to analyze disposal of surplus real property on Fort Greely and relocation of tenant activities to Fort Wainwright. These documents will be completed by the fall of 1999 (HQ, USARPAC, 1996).